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Olympics 2012 Culture Splash Meet Nigerian Authors, Books At Royal Theatre, Stratford East, London

SUNDAY, 29 JULY 2012 00:00 EDITOR ART - ARTS

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THE three-part Literature Showcase curated by the Committee for Relevant Art, CORA as part of showcase of Nigerian Arts, Culture and Lifestyle in the course of the Olympics kicked off on Thursday at the Theatre Royale, Stratford East. On stage to share precious moments with the audience were UK-based Nigerian novelist Diran Adebayo, playwright Ade Solanke and poet Nnorom Azuonye.

Aside fielding questions from the moderator, Lookman Sanusi (artiste and CEO of BubblesFM), and members of the audience, the writers also read from their works as well as engaged in discussing the state of Nigerian literature vis-a-vis the notion of multiculturalism under the theme 'Imagine Nigeria'.

Titled Nigeria House Literature Showcase, the event is designed to exhibit the best of Nigerian Literature through book readings, conversations on literature and a display of a wide range of books by Nigerian authors at home and in the Diaspora. It is produced by the Bank of Industry and British Council but directed and coordinated by CORA Art & Cultural Foundation, organisers of the quarterly Art Stampede since 1991 and the Lagos Book and Art Festival, LABAF, since 1999.

The Literature programme continues tomorrow at the same venue — Royale Theatre, Stratford East — with its second leg that would feature novelist Diran Adebayo; poet and literary activist Nnorom Azuonye; fiction writer Chibundu Onuzor (also UK-based) and Nigeria-based playwright, Zainabu Jallo; and dramatist, fiction writer, Rotimi Babatunde, who won the 2012 Caine Prize for Literature with his short story Bombay's Republic. It will be moderated by medical doctor, writer and critic, Ike Anya.

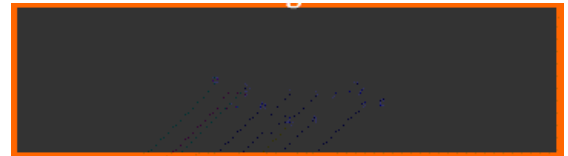
The third and last leg of the Showcase would hold on Tuesday, July 31 and will feature two Caine prize winners — Helon Habila (2001) and Rotimi Babatunde (2012) alongside Ade Solanke, Chibundu Onuzor, and Zainabu Jallo.

Books by the authors alongside those by other Nigerian authors have been on display at the venue since Wednesday July 24 and would be available through August 3 2012.

Profile of the Authors:

DIRAN ADEBAYO is an acclaimed novelist, short fiction writer and cultural critic best known for his vivid, picaresque takes on modern Britain, and his distinctive style. His debut novel, *Some Kind of Black*, was one of the first to articulate a British-African perspective, and was hailed as breaking new ground for the 'London novel'. It won him numerous awards, including the Writers Guild of Great Britain's New Writer of the Year Award, the 1996 Saga Prize, a Betty Trask Award, and The Authors' Club's 'Best First Novel' award. It was also long listed for the Booker Prize, serialised on radio and is now a Virago Modern Classic. His second novel, *My Once Upon a Time*, a dazzling slice of neo-noir set in a re-imagined city, was also widely acclaimed, and solidified his reputation as a groundbreaker. In 2004 he co-edited 'New Writing 12', the British Council's annual anthology of British and Commonwealth literature, with Blake Morrison and Jane Rogers. Diran has also written for television and radio, including the 2005 documentary 'Out of Africa' for BBC2. As a critic, he's written extensively in the national press and appeared as a guest on shows such as 'Newsnight', 'The Culture Show', 'This Week' and the 'Today' programme, discussing everything from sport and race to politics and popular culture.

He is currently writing his third novel, *The Ballad of Dizzy and Miss P*, and a sports-based memoir. He is a member of the National Council of the Arts Council of England and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He studied Law at Oxford University.



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LAGOS WEATHER

26C	28C	27C
Sun	Mon	Tue
Mostly Cloudy	Scattered T-Storms	Scattered T-Storms

ABUJA WEATHER

C	29C	26C
Sun	Mon	Tue
Mostly Sunny	Scattered T-Storms	Scattered T-Storms

PORT HARCOURT WEATHER

C	28C	27C
Sun	Mon	Tue
Scattered Storms	Scattered T-Storms	Scattered T-Storms

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ZAINABU JALLO was nominated in 2011 by the Royal Court Theatre London, British Council and Ford Foundation Nigeria to join nine other young Nigerians to begin a 'New Writing from Nigeria project'. In 2008 she was nominated by the same bodies to attend a summer writing residency at the Royal Court Theatre in London. In 2009, she was awarded a fellowship for a three-month residency at The Global Arts village New Delhi, India where she had readings of some of her work. *Onions Make Us Cry*, her second play got published in 2010. The play had a reading at the Contacting The World International Theatre Forum in the same year got nominated for the 2010 Nigeria Prize for Literature. *Onions Make Us Cry* was read at the festival of new international plays in March 2011 at the LARK in New York. The play had full performances by the Crown Troupe of Africa in Lagos, Nigeria. In November 2011, *Onions make us Cry* was announced as one of the six winning plays of the National Studio London, Africa Project. Zainabu is one of the playwrights whose work will be featured at the 9th Women Playwrights international conference in Sweden, August 2012. She has recently been offered a place at the Sundance Theatre Lab as writer in residency 2012 as well as a place in the 2012 Château de Lavigny, Maison d'écrivains Fondation Ledig-Rowohlit Residency Laussane, Switzerland. Her new play *HOLY NIGHT* has received a few readings and made it to the final round of the internationalist Playwright Contest with readings in New York later in the year.

NNOROM AZUONYE is a poet, writer, dramatist, essayist, interviewer, literary editor and publisher. Founder and Administrator of Sentinel Poetry Movement, publishers of 'Sentinel Literary Quarterly', 'Sentinel Nigeria', and 'Sentinel Champions' magazines, he is the author of the poetry collections: 'Letter to God and Other Poems' (2003), and 'The Bridge Selection: Poems for the Road' (2005). His play 'A Tasty Taboo' received its world premiere in 1990 at the University of Nigeria Arts Theatre, Nsukka, and 'Funeral of the Minstrel' (a short play) was published in the Sentinel Annual Literature Anthology (2011). His poems, short stories, essays, and interviews have appeared in several international journals including: *Opon Ifa*, *Sunday Statesman*, *Weekly Star*, *Agenda*, *Theatre Forum*, *Orbis*, *DrumVoices Revue*, *Maple Tree Literary Supplement*, *African Writing*, *Flair*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly* and *Eclectica*. His works have also appeared in the anthologies: 'Voices Against Racism: 100 Poems Against Racism' (Edited by Thomas O'Flaherty), 'For the Love of God' (Edited by Desmond Kon et al.), 'Songs for Wonodi' (Edited by Dike Okoro), 'Not Only the Dark' (Edited by Jo Field and Nicky Gould), and 'Sentinel Annual Literature Anthology' (Edited by Nnorom Azuonye, Unoma Azuah and Amanda Sington-Williams). Azuonye lives in South London with his wife and children.

ADE SOLANKE is a playwright and screenwriter, and founder, creative director of Spora Stories, developing and producing high-quality, entertaining, socially-engaged plays and films about the African diaspora. Ade earned her MFA in Film and Television at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, where she was a Fulbright Fellow and Phi Beta Kappa International Scholar. She worked as a story analyst for several Hollywood studios and has taught scriptwriting at the University of London and Pan-African University, Nigeria. Earlier in her career, Ade was voted 'London's Top Young Entrepreneur' for her writing business by Nat West Bank and Shell UK. In collaboration with other diaspora storytellers, Spora explores new story-delivery systems.

Her recent plays have been performed in two leading festivals of contemporary writing: Talawa's 'Unzipped' at the Young Vic and Tiata Fahozdi's 'Tiata Delights' at the Almeida. Her latest play *Pandora's Box* has been staged in major theatres around London. She is a member of Soho Theatre's Writers' Hub and has run highly-successful writing courses and workshops at the Royal Court and Soho Theatre. She also teaches scriptwriting at Goldsmiths. She has written radio scripts for the BBC and wrote the screenplay for 'The Family Legacy,' a Nollywood-style film about sickle-cell.

CHIBUNDU ONUZO was born in Nigeria in 1991 and is the youngest of four children. She is currently studying History at King's College, London. When not writing, Chibundu can be found playing the piano or singing. The publication of her first novel, *The Spider King's Daughter*, in 2012 by Faber and Faber was greeted with acclaim for her achievement at getting such a coveted publishing deal at a young age. In June 2012, she was named UK's Number 1 best black student. The award was given by Rare Rising Stars. She proved to be the first woman to top the list. Chibundu has since started a blog to promote her book and chips in commentaries on Nigeria, notably a recent article published on the website of the UK Guardian, on the resilience of Nigerians in the face of widespread terrorism.

HELON HABILA studied Literature at the University of Jos and lectured for three years at the Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, before going to Lagos to write for *Hints Magazine*. He is a poet and prose fiction writer. Extracts from his collection of short stories, *Prison Stories*, were published in Nigeria in 2000. The full text was published as a novel in the UK under the title *Waiting for an Angel* in 2002 and received a Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region, Best First Book) in 2003. Also in 2002, he moved to England to become a Writing Fellow at the University of East Anglia. Helon Habila also won the MUSON Poetry Prize in 2000 and was the arts editor of the *Vanguard Newspaper*. He is currently teaching Creative Writing at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, where he lives. His second novel, *Measuring Time*, the tale of twin brothers living in a Nigerian village, was published in 2007, and his latest novel is *Oil On Water* (2010), shortlisted for the 2011 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region, Best Book).

ROTIMI BABATUNDE, winner of the 2012 Caine Prize for African Writing, is a poet, playwright and fiction writer. His short stories have been published in *Little Drops*, *Fiction on the Web*, and *Mrabilia Review*, among other publications, and broadcast on the BBC World Service. He is a fiction award recipient of New York's Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation, a winner the Abuja Writer's Forum Cyprian Ekwensi Prize

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for short stories, and his story *Bombay's Republic* won the 2012 Caine Prize for African Writing. Rotimi Babatunde's plays include *An Infidel in the Upper Room* (presented at the Royal Court's Jerwood Theatre Downstairs, at the Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA), and broadcast on the BBC World Service); *The Bonfire of the Innocents* (commissioned by Riksteatern, the Swedish National Touring Theatre, and staged in Swedish translation as *Elddopet*); and *A Shroud for Lazarus* (world premiere at Halcyon Theatre, Chicago). He is currently working on a new collaborative theatre project, part of the London 2012/World Stages London, jointly produced by the Royal Court Theatre and the Young Vic. His poems have been published in *Daybreak on the Land*, *A Volcano of Voices*, *NT Lit Mag*, and translated into German. His writing has been recognised with literary fellowships by the Fondazione Pistoletto's Unidee Program and the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Centre in Italy, and by Ledig House and the MacDowell Colony in the United States. Babatunde lives in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Monday and Tuesday sessions will be moderated by UK-based Ike Anya, a medical doctor and creative writer and literary critic; and Dr Sola Adeyemi, a theatre artiste, scholar and lecturer at the Goldsmith College, London. The event would hold at 4pm every day. Lookman Sanusi, theatre artiste, and founder of the Bubbles FM, London moderated last Thursday debut of the showcase. The Showcase is coordinated by CORA Director of Projects, Ayo Arigbabu, writer and publisher of DaDa Books.

For further information, www.coraartfoundaton.com; info@coraartfoundation.com

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